

VZCZCXRO0155
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHDS #2057 2370449
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 250449Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5974
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3421
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEWMFD/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 002057

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/FO AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA TO INVITE SELECT FOREIGN ELECTION
OBSERVERS

¶1. (SBU) In an August 19 courtesy call with Charge, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin stated that the Ethiopian Government (GoE) has decided to invite select foreign election observers to monitor the country's 2010 national elections. Seyoum noted specifically that the Foreign Ministry has already issued an invitation to the Carter Center to participate. The Foreign Minister stated that the next step would be for the Carter Center to send an "advance team" to Ethiopia to discuss operational modalities with the Foreign Ministry before deploying a full observer mission.

¶2. (SBU) The Foreign Minister further noted that while the GoE is interested, in principle, to invite a European Union Election Observation Mission (EOM), discussions remain on-going with embassies from EU member states on arrangements. Seyoum specifically recounted how in 2005 the EU Mission to Ethiopia signed a code of conduct and statement of principles governing the scope of work for the EOM, but only after the EOM breached those agreements did the EU Mission clarify that the agreements were not binding on the EOM. Seyoum argued that before Ethiopia approves another EOM for the 2010 elections, the GoE wants to be certain that any agreements signed are binding on, and honored by, the EOM. In separate calls by the CDA on the British and French Ambassadors, the Europeans indicated that the EU has not yet reached a decision regarding a potential EU observer mission. Both felt that EU observers could be useful in principle, but noted that there were internal EU issues to be addressed, as well as discussions with the GoE. Seyoum implied that the GoE is waiting for an EU proposal; the French Ambassador suggested that the EU needs a formal expression of GoE interest first.

¶3. (SBU) In a later meeting with the CDA, PM Meles affirmed that the GoE wants Carter Center involvement. He added that he hopes that a positive Carter Center response would be received soon, as it will be important to ensure all arrangements are made well in advance to permit full observer participation. In response to the CDA, Meles concurred that broad international observer participation would be beneficial, but offered no comments specifically regarding potential EU involvement.

COMMENT

¶4. (SBU) The GoE's initial receptivity to international election observers is positive. With elections presumed to be held in May 2010, the election process is likely to begin in earnest as early as November 2009. USAID/Ethiopia has \$1.15 million allocated to support election processes, but will need to begin programming this money soon if we are to support an observation effort that addresses the entire election process. We, and many others in the international community, recognize the potential risk of appearing to endorse a flawed election process if a U.S.-supported observation effort begins too late in the process or is subjected to too many operational restrictions. As such, we will reach out to The Carter Center to explore their understanding of the GoE's offer to them and encourage them to act quickly to address modalities with the Foreign Ministry.

MEECE